

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## State Dept. Official Assesses Counterterrorism Strategy

By Lauren Monsen | Staff Writer | 19 April 2012

Washington — The U.S. Department of State's new Bureau of Counterterrorism is working to protect the United States by developing and implementing "civilian counterterrorism strategies, policies, operations and programs to disrupt and defeat the networks that support terrorism," says a top State Department official.

Daniel Benjamin, ambassador-at-large and coordinator for counterterrorism in the new bureau, offered his assessment of the bureau's overall approach in April 18 testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade.

The Counterterrorism Bureau, established early in 2012, symbolizes the State Department's growing role in counterterrorism, Benjamin said. In support of the U.S. government's mission to secure the United States against foreign threats, the bureau "leads in supporting U.S. counterterrorism diplomacy and seeks to strengthen homeland security, counter violent extremism and build the capacity of partner nations to deal effectively with terrorism."

All of those efforts, taken together, constitute what the State Department calls "strategic counterterrorism," which takes as its premise that U.S. counterterrorism efforts "require a whole-of-government approach that must go beyond traditional intelligence, military and law-enforcement functions," Benjamin told lawmakers.

"We are engaged in a broad, sustained and integrated campaign that harnesses every tool of American power — civilian, military and the power of our values — together with the concerted efforts of allies, partners and multilateral institutions to address a short-term and a long-term challenge," he said.

"Our tactical abilities — as exemplified by the extraordinary mission against [Osama] bin Laden last year — answer a critical national need, but are only part of our comprehensive [counterterrorism] strategy that also includes concerted action to reduce radicalization, stop the flow of new recruits, and create an international environment that is inhospitable for all the kinds of activity that precede terrorist violence," he added.

Achieving the bureau's goals requires, among other things, "advancing our values and the rule of law," he said. "Only this way can we empower our partners so that they can deal with ... local and regional threats before they become global ones that demand a much more costly response."

He stressed the importance of building partner capacity.

"One of the central challenges to our security is that weak states serve as breeding grounds for terrorism and instability," he said. "When there is a recognition that these gaps exist, we can help with specific capacity-building programs. ... This involves helping countries develop their law enforcement and legal institutions to do a better job tracking, apprehending, arresting, prosecuting and incarcerating terrorists, while at the same time respecting human rights and securing their borders."

Benjamin cited the Counterterrorism Bureau's flagship capacity-building program, known as the Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program. "The ATA program is most effective in countries which have the combination of political will and basic law-enforcement skills to be able to effectively use and ultimately sustain the advanced training ATA provides," he said. "This formula has been especially successful in Indonesia, Turkey, Colombia, parts of North Africa, and Jordan."

Also, the bureau is working with interagency partners to counter violent extremist messaging, "particularly that of al-Qaida and its affiliates."

Besides working with the United Nations and other multilateral organizations, "we have formed bilateral counterterrorism consultations with many countries," Benjamin said. These consultations have strengthened partnerships "so we can complement one another's efforts in pursuit of a comprehensive approach to our common challenges."

Looking back over the past year, "there is no question that Osama bin Laden's departure from the scene was a landmark in the fight against al-Qaida," he said. But "while al-Qaida's core is seriously degraded, the threat we're facing is still a serious one, and we must remain vigilant."

"New terrorist threats will require innovative strategies, creative diplomacy and even stronger partnerships," he said.

The State Department must remain nimble in dealing with a changing terrorist threat, but "we have made a lot of progress," Benjamin said. "Together, I believe we can accomplish our goals and make the world a safer place for all of us."

## Global Financial Leaders Gather for IMF, World Bank Meetings

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 19 April 2012

Washington — The global economy has entered a "timid recovery" and still faces high risks, says International

Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Christine Lagarde.

Speaking at the opening of the annual IMF and World Bank Spring Meetings in Washington April 19, Lagarde called on policymakers around the world to work together in addressing challenges, such as high unemployment, protracted slow growth and potential oil price hikes, that pose a threat to global economic recovery.

The director's comments followed the April 17 release of the IMF's annual World Economic Outlook, a report delivering a global economic growth forecast of 3.5 percent for 2012 and 4.1 percent for 2013. The report predicts continued strong growth in emerging and developing economies, but a growth forecast of only 1.4 percent in 2012 and 2 percent in 2013 for advanced economies.

Lagarde said that to promote global economic stability and a stronger recovery, the IMF needs to increase its firepower through new pledges of financial support. The fund has \$320 billion in current pledges from member countries, but expects to gain more support for poverty-reduction efforts, multilateral surveillance and governance reforms during the meetings.

Outgoing World Bank President Robert Zoellick spoke following Lagarde to officially open the meetings April 19.

He said in prepared remarks that the meeting's modernization agenda "involves a rigorous focus on results, openness and accountability." Emphasizing the importance of democratic development, he said the IMF and World Bank are taking steps that "lay the foundation for expanding social accountability, fighting corruption and building better governance."

"Investments in civil society and good governance are as vital as investments in roads, factories and clinics," Zoellick said before announcing the formation of a new Global Partnership for Social Accountability to provide support to civil society organizations.

He said countries, both developed and developing, need to focus on structural reforms to drive future growth. To do its part, Zoellick said, the World Bank and the IMF have outlined a structural growth agenda that prioritizes public-private partnerships in developing infrastructure as well as gender and financial inclusion, so that countries may "gain the growth opportunities from empowering all their people."

Zoellick said developing countries in particular are "vital to the world economy," and have provided two-thirds of

global economic growth in the past five years.

But he said even countries with fast-growing economies face significant challenges, and that working together with other nations around the world is the only way to achieve widespread and sustained growth and global stability.

Lagarde and Zoellick are scheduled to meet with global financial leaders on a wide range of topics including poverty reduction, women's economic participation and strategies to create jobs before the meetings end April 21.

### **Afghan Security Transition Timetable "On Track," Secretary Clinton Says**

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 18 April 2012

Washington — The transition of security control of Afghanistan from international forces to the Afghan government is "on track" for 2014, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said, adding that countries in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization had met and reaffirmed their support for the transition and their "enduring commitment to Afghanistan."

Speaking in Brussels April 18 with Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, Clinton said, "We are on track to meet the December 2014 deadline for completing the security transition. Already 50 percent of the Afghan people are secured primarily by Afghan forces, and by this spring it will be 75 percent."

When NATO members meet in Chicago in May, they will decide on the next phase of the transition, Clinton said, and hope to be ready to "define NATO's enduring relationship with Afghanistan after 2014." Clinton added that NATO will "work with the Afghans to ensure that the Afghan national security force is fully funded."

The security transition is only part of a "larger enterprise" that includes political and economic dimensions for Afghanistan's future, Clinton said, and others in the international community and Afghanistan's neighbors have "a central role to play."

"Beyond NATO, many nations are invested in Afghanistan's future and are providing support for the Afghans to attain self-reliance, stability and further their democratic future," she said.

The secretary responded to reports of an April 17 incident in which water at a girl's school in Afghanistan was poisoned, sickening 150 girls. She said such incidents serve as a reminder that "there are people who would destroy Afghanistan's long-term future in order to restrict the rights of women and girls."

"Human rights protections for religious and ethnic minorities are also still fragile. Universal human rights are critical to Afghanistan's security and prosperity, and we will continue to make them a priority," she said.

Clinton also praised the "fast and effective" response of Afghan security forces to recent attacks in Kabul.

"Not long ago, this kind of response by Afghans themselves would not have been possible. So the Afghans are proving themselves increasingly ready to take control of their own future," she said.

Panetta said that in the incidents, the internationally trained Afghan forces "responded quickly, professionally and with great courage, rendering ineffective those largely symbolic attacks that we saw in and around Kabul."

He said history has shown that insurgencies ultimately are best defeated by local forces who know the terrain, culture and the neighborhood. "When the Afghans do their job, we are doing our job. When the Afghans win, we win," Panetta said.

Under the third phase of the transition this spring, Afghans are increasing their security and governance responsibility from more than 50 percent of Afghanistan's population to 75 percent. "They have been in the lead for counterterrorism night operations since December, and now, thanks to a memorandum of understanding that was recently signed, all of these operations will fall under the authority of Afghan law," Panetta said.

The defense secretary added, "In less than six months' time, Afghan security forces will take full leadership of detention operations, thanks again to another agreement that was signed recognizing Afghan sovereignty."

The defense secretary also cited an increase in the number of former Taliban forces that have put down their arms and reintegrated into Afghan society. In January 2011, some 600 Taliban had participated in the program, and as of April 2012, the number has increased to more than 4,000, he said.

"We intend to build on this success. We're committed to an enduring presence in Afghanistan post-2014 and a continuing effort to train, advise and assist the ANSF [Afghan National Security Forces] in protecting the Afghan people and denying terrorists a safe haven. We cannot and we will not abandon Afghanistan," Panetta said.

## Without Free Media, Everyone Suffers

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 18 April 2012

Washington — "Media freedom is the moral equivalent of oxygen; it is how society breathes and it is a key pillar of building civil societies," says Tara Sonenshine, the new U.S. under secretary of state for public diplomacy.

Sonenshine, who has worked as a journalist, said she has seen the occupational hazards journalists must face. When the free flow of news and information is cut off, she said, "societies suffer. Economies suffer. Individuals suffer."

Sonenshine joined Michael Posner, assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor, for a special briefing April 18 at the Foreign Press Center in Washington to discuss the "Free the Press" campaign in the run-up to World Press Freedom Day on May 3.

The "Free the Press" campaign focuses on the many ways in which journalists around the world are under duress, ranging from laws restricting freedom of expression on the Internet, to intimidation, threats and fines, to mysterious and frightening "disappearances."

Posner noted that the Committee to Protect Journalists — an independent organization devoted to defending journalists — reports that the number of journalists detained in the last 11 years has actually increased, from 118 journalists in 2001 to 179 imprisoned today. In 2012 alone, 17 journalists have been killed, according to the committee.

Responding to questions from reporters in Washington representing international media as well as reporters in Africa and New York City who were connected by phone, Sonenshine acknowledged that traditional news media, under pressure from social media and the Internet, are finding it difficult to develop a sustainable economic model to stay in business. But in the search for economic support, she said, media should not be subject to corporate or government interference.

"Government's role is as a convener," Sonenshine said. "We do want to convene and listen to one another about what will enable print, radio, online, new PDA [personal digital assistant] newscasts to survive and thrive so that we have the best in journalism."

Sonenshine and Posner emphasized that standards for freedom of expression and for free and independent media are defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and apply to all governments worldwide.

Free media are also essential for the economic development of a nation, Posner said.



"I think for many years we had a somewhat false debate about the relationship between civil and political rights and economic and social rights," Posner said. "The reality is that those rights are indivisible."

Countries trying to build stronger economies need transparency and public debate about economic choices and policies, he said. "Journalistic freedom and freedom of expression enhance the abilities of governments and countries to enjoy economic prosperity and strength," Posner said.

### **President Obama, USAID Launch Innovation Fund for the Americas**

17 April 2012

Washington — President Obama has announced a new Innovation Fund for the Americas (IFA) to support cost-effective and innovative solutions to some of the Latin American and Caribbean region's toughest development challenges. The president made the announcement during his April 14 address at the Sixth Summit of the Americas in Cartagena, Colombia.

As a region, Latin America and the Caribbean has made impressive social, economic and political progress in the past several decades, but countries continue to grapple with security, governance and climate change issues that could threaten these gains.

Based at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the IFA seeks to fund the most promising development solutions proposed by nongovernmental organizations, academia, entrepreneurs and the private sector. Using the agency's Development Innovation Ventures staged financing model, successful applicants can access grants ranging from \$100,000 to \$15 million to pilot and rigorously test their ideas and bring them to scale, USAID says.

"This fund will tap into the ingenuity of the people of Latin America and the Caribbean and the world, to help USAID do better development at a lower cost," said Mark Feierstein, USAID assistant administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean. "Anyone with a good idea is welcome to apply."

The IFA is especially seeking proposals that address:

- Energy, climate change, citizen security, at-risk youth, education and democracy challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Challenges within the four pillars of the U.S. government's Haiti strategy: infrastructure and energy, food and economic security, health and other basic services, and governance and rule of law.

### **Secretary Clinton on Burma's Thingyan New Year Water Festival**

17 April 2012

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Office of the Spokesperson  
April 17, 2012

#### **STATEMENT BY SECRETARY CLINTON**

Thingyan - New Year Water Festival

On behalf of President Obama and the people of the United States, I am delighted to send best wishes to the people of Burma as you celebrate Thingyan.

Over the past year, Burma has taken important steps on an historic new path toward democracy and economic development. As you build a brighter future filled with new opportunities, the United States will continue to work with you to strengthen mutual understanding and trust between our two countries and peoples. We look forward to deepening cooperation on a wide range of issues that promote democratization and national reconciliation, from increasing access to education to expanding health care and encouraging a vibrant civil society.

As you gather with family, friends, and neighbors to honor your rich traditions and culture, know that the United States sends our congratulations and best wishes for a peaceful, prosperous, and happy New Year.

### **U.S. Illegal Drug Use Down Substantially from 1970s**

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 17 April 2012

Washington — The Obama administration is working to reduce the demand for illegal drugs inside the United States through public health and safety approaches, as well as cooperating with other countries to reduce drug supplies.

The White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) released its annual National Drug Control Strategy for 2012 on April 17, and in a press statement the ONDCP said drug use in the United States "has dropped substantially over the past thirty years," thanks to local, state and federal government efforts, as well as international cooperation.

"The rate of Americans using illicit drugs today is roughly one-third the rate it was in the late '70s. More recently, there has been a 40 percent drop in current cocaine use and meth use has dropped by half," the press release stated.

It added that to build on this progress, the Obama

administration has requested more than \$10 billion from the U.S. Congress in its 2013 fiscal year budget request “to support drug education programs and support for expanding access to drug treatment for people suffering from substance use disorders,” as well as \$9.4 billion for domestic law enforcement, \$3.7 billion for interdiction and \$2 billion for international programs.

ONDCP Director Gil Kerlikowske said in the 2012 report that the United States is aiming for “a 15 percent reduction in the rate of drug use and similar reductions in drug use consequences” during the five-year period covering 2010–2015.

Through U.S. community-based programs and early health care intervention, Kerlikowske said, “we will work to prevent illicit drug use and addiction before their onset and bring more Americans in need of treatment into contact with the appropriate level of care.”

At the same time, “we will continue to counter drug production and trafficking within the United States and will implement new strategies to secure our borders against illicit drug flows. And we will work with international partners to reduce drug production and trafficking and strengthen rule of law, democratic institutions, citizen security, and respect for human rights around the world,” he said.

The report said that through “shared responsibility” and effective cooperation, “the United States — working with international partners — can reduce illicit drug use, production, trafficking, and associated violence” and that reduced supplies “are often closely tied to reductions in drug use and its consequences.”

As an example, the report cited cooperation between the United States and Colombia to disrupt the cocaine market over the past 10 years.

The two countries “have worked together to reduce drug production, strengthen the rule of law, and increase citizen security,” which had been threatened by drug-funded terrorist and criminal organizations, and as a result, “potential production capacity for pure cocaine in Colombia was reduced from an estimated 700 metric tons in 2001 to 270 metric tons in 2010, a 61 percent decline,” the report said.

The reduced availability has also led to lower reported rates of cocaine use in the United States, backed up by significant declines in the number of Americans testing positive for cocaine use, the report said.

## Americas Have Shared Future, Obama Says at Summit

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 15 April 2012

Washington — The United States and other nations of the Western Hemisphere are equal partners in their shared prosperity, security and support of democracy and human rights, said President Obama, in an April 14 address to the Summit of the Americas in Cartagena, Colombia.

The meeting of 34 regional government leaders is being held April 14–15, and it is the sixth summit of hemispheric nations since the first in 1994.

President Obama repeated a pledge he made at the last regional summit to pursue partnerships with other governments based in mutual interest and respect and shared responsibility.

“In the Americas, there are no senior or junior partners, we're simply partners,” Obama said.

Citizens of the Western Hemisphere are rising from poverty to the middle class with great speed in recent years. That expanded prosperity has been a boon to all, but greater potential exists, Obama said.

“So we've worked together to increase lending through the Inter-American Development Bank, promote micro finance, reform tax systems, eliminate barriers to investment and forge clean energy and climate partnerships,” he said.

New trade agreements will further contribute to prosperity, Obama said, citing increased trade between the United States and Colombia, Panama and Brazil. Producing the U.S. goods that are sold to neighboring nations of the hemisphere is an important source of jobs in the United States.

Small and medium-sized businesses are key players in ongoing prosperity, so Obama announced the Small Business Network of the Americas (SBNA) to better support these businesses. The intent is to build greater contacts among businesses of the region in support of increased trade expansion, job creation and economic growth.

In recognition of the importance of women in business, the Obama administration is also creating the Women's Entrepreneurship in the Americas (WEAmericas) initiative. This public-private partnership will aim to hurdle barriers that prevent women from getting into business — access to markets, financing, and building capacity and skills.

The United States has expressed its support for a Colombia-initiated campaign to expand the electric grid through the region, and Obama took that proposal one step further in his address to one of the key summit meetings. He proposed a Broadband Partnership of the Americas, to bring faster Internet access to more areas, particularly rural areas

On the issue of security, Obama paid special tribute to governments of Colombia, Chile and Mexico for their "extraordinary courage against the narco-traffickers and gangs that threaten our people." The United States has provided significant support for those efforts in financing, equipment and training and will continue to do so, he said.

Recognizing the toll that this ongoing battle has taken, Obama said, "There are frustrations and that some call for legalization [of some drugs]." The United States will not follow that course, he said, but will continue to accept its share of responsibility for shutting down the flow of money and guns into the region from the United States.

Regarding the spread of democracy and human rights, Obama quoted the Inter-American Democratic Charter in which nations stated their obligation to promote and defend democracy. Nations of the region fulfilled that pledge, he said, when they denounced a 2009 military coup in Honduras and helped support a return to constitutional order.

On April 15, Obama is set to participate in a leaders retreat, and will later attend a multilateral meeting with Caribbean leaders and a bilateral meeting with Colombia's president, Juan Manuel Santos.

### **U.S., International Partners Condemn North Korea's Missile Launch**

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 13 April 2012

Washington — The United States and its international partners are condemning North Korea's attempted missile launch as a threat to regional security and a violation of international law.

"While this action is not surprising given North Korea's pattern of aggressive behavior, any missile activity by North Korea is of concern to the international community," White House press secretary Jay Carney said in an April 12 statement.

Even though the launch failed, Carney said the United States "remains vigilant in the face of North Korean provocations and is fully committed to the security of our allies in the region."

North American Aerospace Defense Command and

United States Northern Command acknowledged the North Korean launch of a Taepo Dong-2 missile April 12. A joint news release said U.S. systems tracked the first missile of an intended multistage southerly launch over the Yellow Sea, with the missile eventually falling into the sea about 165 kilometers west of Seoul, South Korea.

"The remaining stages were assessed to have failed and no debris fell on land," the statement said.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice said the U.N. Security Council held consultations following the attempted launch to address the situation.

"Members of the Security Council deplored this launch, which is in violation of Security Council Resolutions 1718 and 1874," Rice said April 13 from New York. She added that the council agreed to "continue consultations on an appropriate response, in accordance with its responsibilities, given the urgency of the matter."

The Group of Eight (G8) advanced economies foreign ministers released a joint statement also condemning the launch, which it said "undermines regional peace and stability."

The ministers from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States called on North Korea to "abstain from further launches using ballistic missile technology or other actions which aggravate the situation on the Korean Peninsula." They also said they are ready to consider, with others, taking measures to respond to all activities by North Korea that violate international rules and obligations.

Carney said the attempted launch only has further isolated North Korea.

"North Korea's long-standing development of missiles and pursuit of nuclear weapons have not brought it security, and never will," Carney said. "North Korea will only show strength and find security by abiding by international law, living up to its international obligations, and by working to feed its citizens, to educate its children, and to win the trust of its neighbors."

The spokesman said President Obama is prepared to engage constructively with North Korea, so long as the country lives up to its commitments, adheres to its international obligations and deals peacefully with its neighbors.

### **Students Across Globe Can Take Online Courses at U.S. Universities**

By Louise Fenner | Staff Writer | 13 April 2012

Washington — Some of America's most elite universities,

including Stanford University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), are experimenting with free online courses that give thousands of motivated students around the world the opportunity to learn sophisticated skills and earn informal credentials.

Advances in video technology, social networks and collaboration software are enabling universities to offer these massive open online courses, or MOOCs, as a way of delivering education to a broad audience at little or no cost.

"This is open courseware plus the interactions around it. This is a very exciting approach," said Richard Culatta, the U.S. Department of Education's deputy director for educational technology.

Open courseware (OCW) — free online access to course materials — was introduced a decade ago by MIT, and institutions around the world have followed suit. Today, hundreds of colleges and universities offer free educational materials and interactive learning experiences. But last fall, Stanford and MIT took open learning to a new level.

At Stanford, two computer scientists taught a free online class called "Introduction to Artificial Intelligence." More than 160,000 people from 190 countries enrolled, and student volunteers translated parts of the course into 44 languages. Ultimately, 23,000 people did all the course work, passed the exams and received a certificate of completion.

Two other free Stanford courses also drew thousands of far-flung enrollees. "There was a very large overseas audience for all the classes," said Mehran Sahami, associate chair for education in Stanford's computer science department. This spring, Stanford launched five more courses, with a total enrollment of nearly 335,000.

MIT, meanwhile, announced that it would offer specially designed, Internet-only courses through a new nonprofit organization called MITx. More than 120,000 people worldwide have signed up for the inaugural course, "Circuits and Electronics," which runs through early June. "At least 20,000 of those students have been actively keeping up with the course's lectures, exercises and online tests," according to MITx.

The course is as rigorous as that taken by MIT students in the classroom (although the online courses do not earn credits at MIT). Since the course is a prototype, the certificate of completion will be free. In the future, students who receive passing grades may pay a fee for the MITx certificate, but course materials will be free.

Princeton, the University of California at Berkeley, the

University of Michigan-Ann Arbor and the University of Pennsylvania also offer some free online courses; they are available, along with Stanford's, on the website Coursera. Another pioneer in this area is Udacity, which is offering its own courses starting in mid-April. Both Udacity and Coursera were founded by computer scientists from Stanford.

## THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

"These are actual classes with a beginning and ending date," and serious students keep up with the pace, Sahami said. Recorded lectures are divided into short segments that contain exercises and problems. "The lecture pauses, there's a quiz and the students cannot continue with the video until they answer the questions," he said.

Students also complete homework assignments (with deadlines) and can participate in online discussions with each other and with instructors.

"They're really forced to think about the information actively, rather than just passively watching a video," Sahami said.

For the Stanford courses, midterm and final exams are administered at testing centers in universities around the world. MITx is not requiring students to go to testing centers for the prototype "Circuits and Electronics" course, but in the future it plans to develop a more sophisticated system to validate students' identities and curb plagiarism and cheating.

Whether certificates from MITx, Stanford, Udacity or other sources will impress a potential employer remains to be seen, Sahami said. "To what extent will people try to use the statements of accomplishment as a credential to show employers, and how do the employers weigh them? I think only time will tell."

Digital certificates and badges that indicate competency in a subject or skill "are only as good as whoever's issuing them," Culatta said. "If it's an organization or group that carries some weight, then these certificates will really mean something."

But even without offering credentials, online courses are filling a need. Sahami recalled that when Stanford posted videos and other materials for 10 of its popular engineering courses on the Internet, "many students sent us emails thanking us for the materials. I taught the introductory programming class, and I had students from every continent except Antarctica send emails. There is clearly a demand for it and an appreciation."



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